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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Differences must not turn into disputes: EAM to Wang

Wang will hold talks with Doval over border; Then head to Pak

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that India and China must adopt a "candid and constructive" approach in advancing ties, rooted in mutual respect, sensitivity, and interest.

"Having seen a difficult period, our two nations now seek to move ahead. Differences must not become disputes, nor competition lead to conflict," Jaishankar said.

In talks held shortly after Wang's arrival in Delhi on a two-day visit, Jaishankar emphasised the need to move forward on the de-escalation process along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, where Indian and Chinese forces have faced off since 2020.

Wang's visit comes ahead of Prime Minister Modi's expected trip to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. The primary agenda is the 24th round of Special Representatives (SR) talks on the boundary issue, to be held with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Tuesday.

The ministers also discussed trade, river data sharing, border trade, connectivity, and people-to-people ties. Jaishankar highlighted the need for a fair, multipolar world order and stable global economy.

Despite troop disengagement at several friction points, both sides continue to maintain 50,000–60,000 soldiers each along the LAC. The face-off formally ended with the October 2024 agreement on Demchok and Depsang. Doval and Wang last met in December in Beijing.

Recent confidence-building measures include resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and India restarting tourist visas for Chinese nationals.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh criticised the government, saying Wang's visit comes just months after China provided Pakistan with weapons and intelligence during Operation Sindoor. He accused Modi of giving China a "clean chit" after Galwan.

Meanwhile, Wang will also visit Pakistan from 21 August for a two-day trip to attend the China-Pakistan strategic dialogue.

He will meet Pakistani civil and military leadership to review bilateral ties and regional developments, including finalising PM Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming visit to China for the SCO Summit (31 Aug–1 September). —*PTI*

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

> **In that endeavour, we must be guided by the three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest. Differences must not become disputes, nor competition conflict**
> -S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister

K'taka Assembly clears bill to protect Devadasis

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

The Karnataka Assembly on Monday passed two significant bills, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Amendment Bill and the Devadasi Bill. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Amendment Bill makes "attempt and preparation to make engagement of a child punishable by rigorous imprisonment, which may extend to two years or with fine, which may extend to Rs 1 lakh or with both". The objective of the Karnataka Devadasi (Prevention, Prohibition, Relief and Rehabilitation) Bill is to raise awareness in the society about the practice of dedicating women as Devadasis, liberate oppressed Devadasi women from all forms of exploitation. —*PTI*
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Shakti sets record for most public travel by women

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Karnataka's Shakti Yojana has set a world record for the highest number of women passengers travelling in public transport, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy announced on Monday. Between 11 June 2023 and 20 July 2025, over 500 crore women undertook ticketed journeys under the scheme, earning the feat a place in the US-based Golden Book of World Records. Reddy credited the success to the efforts of KSRTC, BMTC, NWKRTC, and KKRTC staff, along with labour leaders. Implemented immediately after Reddy assumed office for the second time, the scheme saw 5,800 new buses added and 10,000 personnel recruited. —*PTI*

Airtel, Jio and VI face nationwide outage

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Major telecom providers Airtel, Jio, and Vi faced widespread outages across India on Monday, with users reporting issues primarily with phone calls. Downdetector flagged high complaint volumes from Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Madurai, and central India. Airtel confirmed a network outage around 3:30 pm, peaking an hour later. "Our team is actively working to resolve the issue," Airtel Cares said. Users complained about being unable to make or receive calls or use data. Many expressed disappointment over poor customer care responses and service disruptions. Restoration timelines remain unclear. —*PTI*

Govt brings bill in LS to decriminalise 288 provisions

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The government introduced a new bill in the Lok Sabha on Monday to decriminalising 288 provisions relating to minor offences across laws, enhancing living standards and improving the business climate. This marks the second Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, following the enactment of a similar law earlier in 2023 that decriminalised 183 provisions in 42 central Acts. Among the areas targeted for decriminalisation are the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. —*PTI*

PUTIN DIALS PM; BRIEFS HIM ON ALASKA SUMMIT

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday reiterated India's consistent call for a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict during a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The call followed Putin's summit with US President Donald Trump in Alaska on Friday — the first such meeting since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine — which ended without a ceasefire deal.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, Putin shared his assessment of the summit, and both leaders discussed ways to strengthen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.

The Ministry of External Affairs welcomed the summit and praised efforts to bring peace to Ukraine. —*PTI*

'WAR ON OPPOSITION'

Oppn calls CEC BJP's man, mulls impeachment

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Opposition parties on Monday accused the Election Commission of failing to discharge its constitutional duty of ensuring a free and fair electoral system, and did not rule out moving an impeachment motion against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. They accused Kumar of acting like a "BJP spokesperson" and "declaring war on Opposition".

Addressing a presser here, representatives of eight parties -- Congress, TMC, SP, DMK, RJD, CPI(M), AAP and SS-UBT -- said the CEC had "failed" to answer their questions on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and voter list irregularities.

The EC has "completely failed" in ensuring a free and fair electoral system, a joint statement of 20 Opposition parties alleged.

TMC's Mahua Moitra and other Opposition leaders demanded that the Lok Sabha be dissolved as the last elections were held on "faulty" voter list.

The procedure for removing the CEC is the same as that for removing a Supreme Court or High Court judge. The CEC can be removed only by Parliament. A motion supported by 50 MPs of the Rajya Sabha or 100 MPs of the Lok Sabha has to be moved in Parliament and passed by the House with a two-thirds majority.

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi & CEC Gyanesh Kumar **PHOTO: PTI**

- A TMC's Mahua Moitra and other Opposition leaders demanded that the Lok Sabha be dissolved as the last elections were held on "faulty" voter list.

Opposition said "the CEC offered no clarification on why the Bihar SIR was being conducted in such a hasty, ad-hoc manner". AAP's Sanjay Singh called Gyanesh 'Agyanesh' (ignorant) and added, "In this revision (SIR), not a single vote was added."

SP's Ramgopal Yadav said, "In the 2022 Uttar Pradesh polls, when Akhilesh Yadav said that a large number of votes of Samajwadi Party supporters had been deleted, the EC issued a notice. In response, 18,000 affidavits were submitted to the EC... Not a single action has been taken till today." —*PTI*

DMK MP is INDIA bloc's favourite for VP polls

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Congress-led INDIA bloc is set to finalise its joint candidate for the upcoming Vice-Presidential election during a key meeting at Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's residence. Sources say the DMK's Rajya Sabha MP Tiruchi Siva is a front-runner, although a respected ISRO scientist from Tamil Nadu has also been proposed as a non-political nominee.

The Opposition is considering a candidate with national stature to counter the NDA's nominee, Maharashtra Governor and seasoned RSS leader CP Radhakrishnan, also from Tamil Nadu.

The move is seen as a strategic attempt to neutralise regional political dynamics ahead of the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

Senior leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, and Mamata Banerjee are expected to participate in the discussions, either in person or virtually.

DMK chief and Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin is also likely to join online.

While Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has reached out to Kharge and other Opposition leaders seeking a consensus candidate, INDIA bloc leaders appear inclined to contest.

The Vice-Presidential poll, prompted by Jagdeep Dhankhar's unexpected resignation, will be held on 9 September, with nominations closing on 21 August. —*PTI*

NEW HEBBAL LOOP OPENS

A new loop of the Hebbal flyover was inaugurated on Monday. It connects Outer Ring Road to Ballari Road **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

1.5km tunnel road from Esteem Mall to Baptist Hospital soon

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said a new 1.5 km-long tunnel road is being planned from Esteem Mall to Baptist Hospital to ease traffic at Hebbal flyover.

He was speaking to reporters on Monday after declaring open the new loop of Hebbal flyover. "The new loop has been built at Rs 80 crore. The other loop from Esteem Mall to Mekhri Circle would be ready by November at Rs 300 crore. The new loops increase the number of lanes from two to six," he explained.

"We have called tenders for 16.5km tunnel road at a cost of Rs 17,000 crore."

Money is not important

"Money is not important; work needs to be completed at any cost. A young MP has accused me of doing projects for money, but I don't need money," he said. Asked if the new loops would lead to more traffic, he said, "I can't respond to everything." —*Salar News*

Why pay toll for 12-hour jam? SC questions NHAI

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Supreme Court on Monday questioned the logic of charging tolls amid severe traffic delays, asking the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) why commuters should pay Rs 150 to cover a 65km stretch in Kerala's Thrissur that recently took 12 hours.

A bench led by DR Gavai, along with Justices K Vinod Chandran and NV Anjaria, reserved its verdict on pleas by NHAI and concessionaire Guruvayoor Infrastructure challenging a Kerala High Court order suspending toll at Paliyekkara plaza due to poor road conditions and heavy congestion on NH-544.

"Why should a person pay Rs 150 if it takes 12 hours to travel a road meant for one hour?" the CJI remarked. —*PTI*

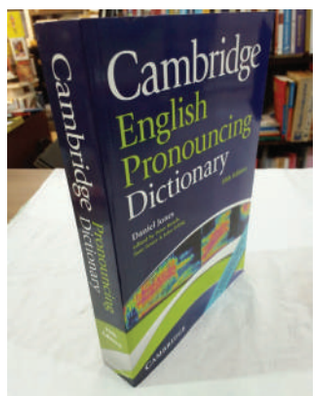
GEN ALPHA PAVES THE WAY

'Skibidi', 'delulu' to be added to Cambridge dictionary

CAMBRIDGE, 18 AUG

Cambridge Dictionary is set to add over 6,000 new words this year, capturing the evolution of language shaped by internet culture, remote work, and societal shifts. Among the additions are viral slang terms like "skibidi", "tradwife", and "delulu", as well as workplace phrases such as "mouse jiggler", "work wife", and "work spouse".

"Skibidi" – a gibberish word from a viral YouTube series – is defined as a term with varying meanings such as "cool" or "bad", or used with no real meaning, often in Gen Alpha slang. "Tradwife", short for "traditional wife", refers to a married woman who embraces domestic roles and often shares her lifestyle online.



"Delulu", a shortened form of "delusional", describes someone who chooses to believe in fantasies or unrealistic outcomes.

The rise of remote work has led to the inclusion of "mouse jiggler", a tool or software that mimics computer activity to appear active online.

Also added is "broligarchy", a blend of "bro" and "oligarchy", describing powerful tech moguls seeking political influence, used for figures such as Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.

Cambridge's Colin McIntosh said only words with lasting relevance, as identified in the Cambridge English Corpus, are selected. —*Agencies*

SIT halts Dharmasthala exhumation, awaits report

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday informed the Assembly that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) has temporarily suspended exhumation and excavation activities in Dharmasthala, pending chemical and forensic reports.

"The SIT has decided to stop this until the reports come," Parameshwara said, adding that the suspension is temporary. Forensic analysis is being conducted to detect possible human DNA at the alleged burial sites. "If traces of human DNA are found, the investigation will take a different course," he said, clarifying that the SIT has full autonomy and the decision does not lie with the government.

Parameshwara also addressed claims of forced burials and threats to a complainant. "A man filed a complaint stating he had received life threats and was forced to bury bodies. He acted out of guilt," he said, adding that victims allegedly included sexually assaulted men and women.

Following a letter from the Women's Commission chairman, the Chief Minister and Home Minister jointly decided to form the SIT.

However, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi criticised the move, calling it a "photo opportunity" by the Congress government. He alleged that the masked complainant admitted to acting on directions, accusing the state of mishandling the situation and demanding accountability and an apology from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. —*Agencies*

UP MLA booked for sexually assaulting woman near KIA

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Shri Bhagwan Sharma alias Guddu Pandit, a Shiv Sena MLA from Uttar Pradesh, has been booked for the alleged sexual assault of a 40-year-old woman and for "threatening to kill her when she resisted," police said on Monday. According to the complaint, the woman, along with her minor son, travelled from Uttar Pradesh to City on 14 August at the MLA's insistence. On the same day, he allegedly took them to several places in the City. The FIR states that on 16 August, the MLA took them to Chitradurga, and the following day, while returning, arranged a room in a five-star hotel near Kempegowda International Airport. Inside the hotel room, he allegedly forced her into sexual relations against her will and threatened to kill her when she resisted. *—PTI*

Kolar police crack 24-yr-old burglary case

KOLAR, 18 AUG

Kolar police have arrested a person involved in a house burglary case which took place twenty-four-years back in the Cottonpet area of Kolar. 48-year-old Mohammed Aziz was currently residing at Banashankari area in Kolar. According to police sources he was arrested a few days after the 2001 burglary. However, he obtained a bail and absconded and evaded arrest. Kolar Superintendent of police Nikhil B recently directed police to trace the accused while reviewing old cases. A team traced his whereabouts to Kolar. Posing as real estate agents, they managed to establish contact with him and lured him promising him property at a low cost, where they then arrested him. Police said that he now had children and grandchildren. *—Salar News*

Flood alerts across State as outflow of dams increase

After heavy rains; schools shut in several districts

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Several dams released massive amounts of water after heavy rain pounded the State. Several districts have issued flood warnings as officials asked people to evacuate from low lying areas.

KRS reservoir near Mysuru — *PHOTO: SALAR*

KRS RESERVOIR
Authorities released 102,000 cusecs from the KRS reservoir in Mysuru. Intense rainfall in the Kodagu region and other catchment areas of the Cauvery River has caused significant inflow into the KRS dam.

Authorities have issued flood warnings for areas along the Cauvery River, urging residents to take necessary precautions. The release of water is a precautionary measure to manage the dam's water level and prevent potential damage. Boating has been suspended at Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary while river banks at Gosai Ghat, Nimishamba temple in Srirangapatna submerged.

ALMATTI RESERVOIR
Flood alerts were sounded in Vijaypura, Yadgir and Raichur districts after more than 1 lakh cusecs of water is set to be released from the Almatti reservoir on Tuesday or Wednesday. Heavy rains along the catchment areas of the Krishna River in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra filled the reservoir to nearly 119-tmcft of water.

Additionally, Maharashtra also released water from the Koyna dam – the largest reservoir in the Marathwada region – into the Krishna reservoir, furthering the inflow to Almatti. The 105-tmcft Koyna dam held 95.5-tmcft of water on Monday.

The one lakh of water is expected to be released to the Narayanpur reservoir in Yadagir district either on Tuesday or Wednesday.

COASTAL KARNATAKA
Several educational institutions up to IInd PUC are set to shut on 19 Aug in the coastal districts of Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, northern district Belagavi and malnad districts -- Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga due to rains.

District administrations issued high alert warnings. The coastal district also barred fishermen from entering the sea.

HIDKAL RESERVOIR
With the Hidkal reservoir releasing 6,000 cusecs of water to the Ghataprabha and Hiranyakeshi rivers, the Belagavi district has warned of potential floods.

The district administration issued a high alert and established temporary rehabilitation centres. *—Salar News*

500 acres of crops affected in heavy rains in Bidar

BIDAR, 18 AUG

U500 acres of crops were affected after 300mm of rain pounded Aurad and Kamalnagar taluks of Bidar on 17 Aug. In Aurad taluk, large areas of farmland in the villages of Bonti, Bavalagav, and Hangarga flooded, and several connecting bridges were damaged.

A small irrigation tank in Bonti collapsed, leading to a massive amount of water spilling and washing away connecting bridges to Bavalgav and Hangarga. *—Salar News*

Lifestyle changes key to preventing heart attacks: Patil

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

There is no need to panic about the reports of rising heart attacks, Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Dr. Sharan Prakash Patil said. Lifestyle changes like regular exercise, pranayama, a balanced diet, timely sleep, and stress management can help prevent the disease, he said.

Responding to a question in the Legislative Council, Patil said there was no significant statistical increase and dismissed speculations linking post-Covid effects to cardiac issues.

Patil announced that the government has mandated the establishment of super-speciality hospitals in all district government hospitals. "Many districts have already begun operations. Trauma centres will also be started," he said.

New units in Bagalkote, Yadgir, and Raichur will be operational soon, while facilities in Bidar, Koppal, and Belagavi are expected to be inaugurated within the three months.

Patil also said the government would look into recent maternal and infant deaths at Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS). *—PTI*

JUGAAD 101

Barricades were put in two places on a busy but damaged Queen's Road in Bengaluru, on Monday — *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BJP to approach SEC over vote-buying linked to CM

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

The State BJP announced on Monday its intention to approach the State Election Commission (SEC) over allegations of vote-buying linked to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. BJP President and MLA BY Vijayendra referred to remarks made by former Congress leader CM Ibrahim and an alleged audio clip featuring Congress MLA Shivalinge Gowda discussing vote purchasing. "The BJP will take up this issue seriously... We will demand a thorough investigation," Vijayendra stated.

"Maybe by tomorrow or the day after, we will approach the State Election Commission and demand a thorough investigation," Vijayendra said.

Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of colluding with the ruling party, saying, "The ECI's credibility will remain in doubt until it honestly fulfills its duty of safeguarding every citizen's vote." He dismissed the ECI's claims regarding electoral roll revisions and expressed concern over mismatches in voter data brought to light by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. *—PTI*

- MLA BY Vijayendra referred to remarks made by former Congress leader CM Ibrahim and an alleged audio clip featuring Congress MLA Shivalinge Gowda discussing vote purchasing

DHARMASTHALA MASS BURIALS

Govt to act against man who said CM killed 28

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

K'TAKA ASSEMBLY MONSOON SESSION

Home Minister G Parameshwara said he has instructed officials to take legal action against a person who accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiahof being involved in 28 murders.

The issue was raised by the Opposition BJP in the Legislative Assembly on Monday. The party questioned the government's inaction against the person who levelled the allegations.

Although the person was not named in the Assembly, official sources and some BJP Legislators identified the person as Mahesh Shetty Thimarody.

Thimarody had spearheaded the fight for justice for Sowjanya, the II year PU student who was raped and murdered in Dharmasthala in 2012.

Thimarody also prominently calling for justice and a probe into the claims of mass murder, rape, and mass burials in Dharmasthala.

"Do you think the government is so helpless? I'm unable to understand... let's not make that person big.... I have given instructions to take action against that person," Parameshwara said. "We will take action mercilessly."

Parameshwara said there are 18 cases against Thimarody.

Speaking post lunch, Parameshwara said that the allegations were made on 27 May, 2023, before the current government was formed. *—PTI*

15L families ineligible to hold BPL cards

15 lakh families are ineligible to receive BPL cards and the government will take action to weed them out, said KH Muniyappa, Food and Civil Supplies Minister. 3.22 lakh families have applied for BPL cards, but they are yet to receive them.

BJP MLA moves breach of privilege motion

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

BJP MLA SR Vishwanath proposed to move a "breach of privilege" motion against an advocate he accused of "running a slander campaign" against him and the religious institution in Dharmasthala.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil and Speaker UT Khader asked Vishwanth to submit a formal notice as per rules and said it would be referred to the privilege committee of the Assembly. His proposal follows a "Dharmasthala Chalo" rally he led to the temple town on Saturday, against a 'smear campaign' agains the Hindu temples , traditions & Dharmasthala.

"I had spoken about an advocate named Jagadish indulging in a slander campaign against me and other political leaders, including CM in Assembly last week, which is my right. After that, he has again spoken ill about me for speaking in Assembly," he said.

"Following my visit to Dharmasthala, he alleged that I have deposited Rs 100 crore black money with Dharmasthala's Dharmadhikari Veerendra Heggade. The advocate has alleged that I illegally got a property in Allalasandra, belonging to Heggade's family, denotified and sold it." *—PTI*

POCSO Act gender neutral, says State HC

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

The Karnataka High Court on Monday dismissed a petition filed by a 52-year-old woman seeking to quash a sexual assault case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, holding that the legislation is gender neutral and applies equally to men and women.

The case pertains to allegations that the petitioner, a neighbour of the complainant, sexually assaulted a 13-year-old boy in May 2020.

Justice M Nagaprasanna, while pronouncing the order said, "the POCSO Act, being a progressive enactment, is intended to safeguard the sanctity of childhood. It is rooted in gender neutrality, with its beneficent object being the protection of children, irrespective of sex."

The court rejected notion that women can only be passive participants in sexual offences, terming argument as "archaic." *—PTI*

Govt: Struggling to find lands for schools, cemeteries, Anganwadis

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told the Legislative Assembly that the government is finding it difficult to obtain land for public services such as cemeteries, playgrounds, schools, and anganwadis.

He said the situation has reached a point where the government often has to purchase land for these purposes, including for constructing taluk offices in several newly formed taluks.

He was responding to a question by Congress MLA K Y Nanjegowda during Question Hour on Monday.

"Many times, MLAs from across the party have requested land for cemeteries. The High Court has repeatedly cracked the whip on this issue for all governments. We now have to purchase land for cemeteries by paying money," Gowda claimed.

He added, "We have not been able to give land to the Women and Child Development Department for 12,000 Anganwadis.... At many places, we are purchasing land for Morarji Schools."

Representative image — *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Morarji schools are a network of residential institutions that aim to provide quality education to meritorious students from the Scheduled Caste communities.

"The situation is such that we have purchased land by paying money to build taluk offices in several newly formed Taluks. We have to think about where to get the land from—for schools and playgrounds for children," he said.

Referring to three Supreme Court cases Gowda stated that public lands, including 'Gomala'—traditionally used for grazing livestock—and 'Devera Kaadu'—a small forest-like grove regarded as the abode of local deities—cannot be allotted for other purposes. *—PTI*

BUILT IN 7 MONTHS

Hebbal flyover finally opens to public

BENGALURU, 18 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday inaugurated the newly constructed loop at the Hebbal flyover in City, aimed at easing traffic congestion for vehicles heading from KR Puram to Mehkri Circle.

Shivakumar, riding his old Yezdi RoadKing motorcycle, said the flyover was constructed in just seven months at a cost of 80 crore rupees and is expected to reduce traffic congestion at Hebbal Junction by 30 per cent.

"Breezing through traffic at Hebbal Junction! The new Hebbal Flyover Loop, inaugurated today, will be a game changer for people commuting via Hebbal Junction. A 700m ramp built at a cost of 80 Cr in just seven months, will reduce traffic congestion by 30 per cent and improve commute quality," he said on X. "Also relived my college days by riding my old Yezdi RoadKing. Dear Bengalureans, we're committed with deep passion, and we will deliver".

A family waiting for vehicle near Hebbal to travel to International Airport during the inauguration of Hebbal fly-over — *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

While many commuters expressed a sigh of relief, some flayed government for blocking traffic while inaugurating the flyover. One notable critic was BJP MP Tejasvi Surya. "Hebbal Road was a nightmare this morning. On my way to Delhi this morning to attend Parliament, I was stuck at Hebbal Junction for nearly 50 minutes along with thousands of people and almost missed my flight," he wrote on X. "All because the State chose Monday morning peak hours as the appropriate time for the flyover inauguration program."

He had earlier criticised Surya and BJP. "They have not done even a single small work during their tenure".

By next December, another line (of Metro) will also be operational. We have authorised BDA (Bangalore Development Authority) Chairman Haris to take this responsibility..... We will see that this problem of North Bangalore will be solved

-DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

"That young MP was saying that we are doing the work for money, we do not need money," he added.*—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

Bill on IIM Guwahati introduced in LS

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

In a significant move, the Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Monday, aiming to designate IIM Guwahati as an institution of national importance. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan introduced the bill. The bill stems from a Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Centre, Assam government, and representatives of the United Liberation Front of Assam to promote the state's development. It highlights that Assam currently lacks an IIM. "Establishing an IIM at Assam shall boost the overall education of the region," the bill stated, noting it would enhance opportunities for students of the Northeast. The Central government will oversee its operations. *—PTI*

Tharoor flattered by Chaturvedi's witty saree remark

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

A recent podcast discussion saw Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi being compared to Congress MP Shashi Tharoor when journalist Smita Prakash remarked, "You are Shashi Tharoor in a saree basically." Chaturvedi laughed, unsure whether it was a compliment for herself or Tharoor, but promised to relay it to him. Following the exchange, Tharoor expressed his appreciation, stating, "Thanks, Priyanka. I consider myself flattered either way!" Chaturvedi addressed speculation about a potential party switch after her meeting with Prime Minister Modi, saying that critics took interest in her moves. She spoke on Maharashtra's language row*—PTI*

Mamata to skip inauguration of Kolkata metro

KOLKATA, 18 AUG

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is set to miss the inauguration of three Kolkata metro projects by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 22 August, according to a senior state government official. Banerjee had originally planned these projects during her term as railway minister. Her decision stems from ongoing protests against alleged harassment of Bengali migrants in BJP-ruled states, which the official claims reflects linguistic discrimination endorsed by the central government. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw invited her to the event, but these projects are now being inaugrated to garner credit.*—PTI*

Andhra's revenue deficit breaches 110% of budget

AMARAVATI, 18 AUG

Andhra Pradesh's revenue deficit has surpassed 110 per cent of the budget estimate, hitting Rs 36,741 crore in the first four months of the fiscal year. This contrasts sharply with the projected annual deficit of Rs 33,186 crore, indicating the state will rely heavily on borrowings or assistance from the Central government. Recent data from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reveals that the fiscal deficit between April and July was Rs 48,354.02 crore, accounting for 61 per cent of the expected Rs 79,926.90 crore for the financial year. However, Goods and Services Tax collections reached 61 per cent of the Rs 27,477.15 crore budget estimate.*—PTI*

Parliament passes Bill to consolidate law on ports

Bill passed amid walkout by Oppn members over protests

Opposition Members protest in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon session of Parliament PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Rajya Sabha on Monday passed The Indian Ports Bill, 2025, which seeks to consolidate the law relating to ports, promote integrated port development, facilitate ease of doing business, and ensure optimum utilisation of India's coastline.

The Bill, earlier passed by the Lok Sabha, was moved for consideration in the Upper House in the afternoon session amid protests by the Opposition, who later staged a walkout demanding discussion on electoral rolls revision in Bihar.

It is a strategic intervention to reposition India's maritime sector for the 21st century," Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said while moving the legislation.

Elaborating how India has expanded its port capacity and cargo handling drastically while cutting down ship turnaround times by nearly 49 per cent through mechanisation and digitalisation, Sonowal said, that the outdated Indian Ports Act of 1908 lacked provisions for long-term planning, modern environmental safeguards, and efficient dispute resolution.

The NDA government has brought in 11 new legislations related to the ministry.

The minister said the Indian Port Bill 2025 has been brought after wider consultations with all stake-holders, all coastal states and users of ports.

The Bill also provides for the management of pollution, disaster, emergencies, security, safety, navigation, and data at ports.

The Opposition MPs on Monday staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha demanding discussion on electoral rolls revision in Bihar.

The Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 2 pm after protests over the rejection of 19 adjournment notices. Trinamool Congress MPs also protested i against the alleged targeting of Bengali-speaking migrants. *—PTI*

Eligibility in national sports body lowered

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Aspirants for the top positions in national federations will be required to serve just one term in the Executive Committee, instead of the "overly restrictive" eligibility rule of two terms prescribed earlier, as the Sports Ministry wants to encourage "younger administrators and athlete-leaders". The National Sports Governance Bill, which was passed by the Parliament last week, originally mandated two terms in the Executive Committee for anyone aspiring for the top three posts. The sports bill, which had been waiting in the wings for over a decade, was passed after extensive consultations held over one year. *—PTI*

Bengal to rehabilitate migrant labourers

KOLKATA, 18 AUG

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday announced a scheme for rehabilitation of migrant labourers, and alleged that they were facing "pre-planned attacks" in BJP-ruled states.

Mamata Banerjee PHOTO: PTI

Speaking to reporters at the state secretariat, Banerjee said under the 'Sramasree' scheme, the migrant labourers, who were willing to return to Bengal, would be provided financial aid of Rs 5,000 for 12 months or till the time they get employment.

Apart from the one-time travel and rehabilitation allowance of Rs 5,000, they will also receive a monthly stipend of 5,000 for up to one year if they are jobless

The state Labour Department will be the nodal agency to implement the scheme.

Around 22 lakh migrant workers have already registered on the state Sramasreeportal, and about 10,000 have returned in the past few days. They will be given an identity card after registration so as to help them to access the benefits of the scehem.

"Thde migrant labourers and their families have been harassed in other states, especially in states having double-engine governments. The cabinet has given approval for the scheme to help in their rehabilitation," Banerjee said.

The announcement of the scheme comes ahead of the assembly pollsin that are due next year. *—PTI/ Agencies*

BACK FROM SPACE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, the first Indian astronaut to visit the International Space Station (ISS), at his Lok Kalyan Marg residence on Monday. Shukla, who was part of the Axiom-4 mission, gifted Modi the mission patch and the Indian tricolour he carried to space. Modi greeted him with a hug, recalling their interaction aboard the ISS with the flag fluttering in the background. Sudhanshu had returned to India from the United States on 17 August. Several Union Minister received him at the international airport in Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Jagan to support Radhakrishnan's candidature

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, 18 AUG

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, CP Radhakrishnan PHOTO: PTI

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has decided to support the candidature of NDA's vice presidential candidate, Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan, in the upcoming poll on 9 September, said sources.

According to sources, the decision was made after Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh made a call on 13 August, seeking support from Reddy for Radhakrishnan's candidature.

Although Reddy's support does not affect numerically, the decision to support Radhakrishnan's candidature is seen as a peace offering, said sources.

Additionally, Senior DMK leader TKS Elangovan said the BJP naming Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the post of vice president is not "going to do anything good" to Tamil Nadu.

Former Rajya Sabha MP, Elangovan, wondered why the DMK should support Radhakrishnan's candidature and said his party would abide by the decision of the INDIA bloc, in which his party is a major partner.

Radhakrishnan's nomination is an elevation to him, and "it is not going to do anything good" to the state, he said. Radhakrishnan's nomination comes against the backdrop of the state's Assembly polls. *—PTI with Agencies*

Asset, documents seized in raids on TN minister

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has executed searches and seized documents concerning properties and investments linked to Tamil Nadu Minister I Periyasamy and his family. The raids took place on 16 August in Chennai and Dindigul, targeting Periyasamy, a key figure in the DMK party, alongside his son, IP Senthil Kumar, daughter Indra, and affiliated companies. Periyasamy, 72, who represents the Athoor assembly constituency, and his son, an MLA from Palani, are being investigated for allegedly possessing disproportionate assets amounting to approximately Rs 2 crore. The money laundering case originates from a disproportionate assets investigation initiated by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC).

I Periyasamy PHOTO: PTI

The Madras High Court overruled the trial court's decision. The SC has since stayed the trial. *—PTI*

Ex-WB minister gets bail in jobs scam

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Supreme Court on Monday granted conditional bail to former West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee in the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam, nearly three years after his arrest. However, he will be released only after the trial court records statements of key witnesses.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh said Chatterjee's continued incarceration would be a "travesty of justice". The court directed that charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act be framed within four weeks, with statements of material witnesses to be recorded within two months.

Chatterjee, an MLA since 2001 and a minister from 2011 to 2022, held the education portfolio from 2016. He is accused of being part of a racket that enabled illegal appointments of unqualified candidates to posts such as primary and assistant school teachers, and Group D staff in West Bengal's education department.

The CBI began its investigation in June 2022 following a Calcutta High Court order prompted by complaints from unsuccessful candidates in teacher eligibility tests. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) also launched a probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

On 22 July 2022, raids at Chatterjee's premises and those of close aides uncovered incriminating documents related to 12 immovable properties and Rs 21.9 crore in cash and gold jewellery worth over Rs 76 lakh.His bail pleas were rejected by the trial court *—PTI*

TECH TALK

Weapons are algorithms, not guns: Adani at IIT

KOLKATA, 18 AUG

Stressing the role of IIT Kharagpur's in technology, self-reliance and nation building, Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani on Monday said algorithms are the weapons and not guns in the invisible wars fought by people today.

He said the world is moving from conventional wars to technology-driven ones, India's ability to prepare will decide the country's future.

Speaking at the 75th Foundation Day of IIT Kharagpur, he said that in the 21st century, a nation can be independent and still be "bound by dependence".

"The wars that we have to fight today are often invisible. They are fought in server farms, and not in trenches. The weapons are algorithms, not guns. The empires are not built on land — they are built in data centres. The armies are botnets, and not battalions," he said.

Adani, who was a special guest at the event, said that 90 per cent of India's semiconductors are imported and one disruption or sanction can freeze the country's digital economy.

"As the world is moving from conventional wars to technology-driven wars of power, India's ability to prepare will decide our future," he said.

"In the case of energy vulnerability, we import 85 per cent of our oil. A single geopolitical incident can restrict our growth," the industrialist said. When India's data crosses the country's borders, it becomes raw material for foreign algorithms, creates foreign wealth and boosts foreign dominance. *—PTI*

VOTER'S LIST ANOMALIES

'SIR vote chori's new weapon'

AURANGABAD, 18 AUG

Rahul Gandhi PHOTO: PTI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls is a "new weapon" of "vote chori" and vowed to protect the 'one person, one vote' principle.

He made the remarks in a post on his WhatsApp channel while talking about a group of people whose names were deleted in the SIR exercise in Bihar even after casting their vote in the previous Lok Sabha election.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said, "SIR is a new weapon of vote theft. Coincidentally, these people standing with me in this picture are 'living' proof of this theft."

The "collusion" of BJP and Election Commission is punishing them for being 'Bahujan' by robbing them of their vote, identity and rights.

This is a question of rights and of everyone's participation in a democracy, he said, adding that "we will not let it end under any circumstances".

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday accused the Election Commission of deleting names of voters belonging to backward communities and acting in favour of the ruling BJP.

Yadav alleged that names of voters belonging to several backward groups, including the Maurya, Pal, Bhagel and Rathore communities, were being struck off the rolls to benefit the BJP.

Yadav claimed his party had identified constituencies where they lost by a narrow margin and where voter deletions played an important role. PTI

TN CM questions EC over listing of Aadhaar as proof

CHENNAI, 18 AUG

MK Stalin PHOTO: PTI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, citing the Electors Rules, 1960 and what he termed the possibility of exclusion of a huge number of voters in Bihar, on Monday asked whether the Election Commission would factor in practical difficulties while conducting SIR in other states. Stalin said the Chief Election Commissioner's press conference has led to more questions than providing answers. He asked: "What prevents the ECI from enlisting Aadhaar as one of the acceptable documents?" *—PTI*

Kerala Min slams Suresh Gopi's 'vanara' remarks

T'PURAM, 18 AUG

Sivankutty, Suresh Gopi PHOTO: PTI

Union Minister Suresh Gopi's "vanara" comments, made in response to allegations of voter list manipulation, have drawn sharp criticism from Kerala's Education Minister, V Sivankutty. In a pointed Facebook post, Sivankutty condemned the remarks as "insulting, unfortunate and undemocratic," asserting they were unbecoming of a public representative.

Sivankutty emphasised the importance of addressing complaints regarding electoral rolls to uphold the democratic process's transparency, warning that ridiculing complainants could undermine citizens' trust in democracy. He urged Gopi to retract his remarks and apologise, stating, "Those in responsible positions should be careful to use decent language." He also noted that political differences should not lead to personal insults.

Gopi, responding to allegations from the Congress and Left parties, had remarked that he did not need to answer the accusations and referred to those raising the claims as "vanaras" (monkeys), suggesting they should seek answers through the courts.Joseph Tajet, president of the district Congress committee, lambasted Gopi's language, asserting it was intended to distract from his wrongdoings. *—PTI*

SC bins AAP MP's plea on UP school closures

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to entertain AAP MP Sanjay Singh's petition challenging the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to shut or merge 105 primary schools due to low enrolment.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and A G Masih allowed Singh to withdraw the plea and approach the Allahabad High Court, directing the latter to hear and decide the matter expeditiously, given the rights of thousands of students are at stake.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Singh, argued that the closures violated the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, particularly Section 6, which mandates primary schools within a one-kilometre radius of habitations. Singh alleged the closures lacked compensatory measures such as transport or residential facilities.

The petition said the move disproportionately affected marginalised children, including girls, those with disabilities, and Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and minority students. The mid-academic year implementation led to overcrowding, dropouts, and safety concerns. *—Agencies*

RAINS BRING MUMBAI TO ITS KNEES

Airlines issue advisories; School and colleges remained shut, train services affected in city

People move a cart with domestic gas cylinders through a waterlogged road following rainfall, in Mumbai on Monday; Commuters make their way through a waterlogged road in Mumbai **PHOTO: PTI**

MUMBAI, 18 AUG

Mumbaikars woke up to very heavy rainfall on Monday, while the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a 'red' alert, forecasting extremely heavy rains at isolated places in the city and its suburbs, prompting the civic body to declare a holiday for schools and colleges.

Roads in several areas of the city got inundated after the heavy downpour for the third consecutive day.

Local trains ran late by around 10 minutes, though the services continued.

Waterlogging was reported in several pockets, leading to slow moving traffic.

Airlines such as Akasa Air and IndiGo issued advisories for travellers, asking them to keep additional time in hand as some routes leading to the Mumbai airport witnessed traffic congestion.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation declared a holiday for all schools and colleges operating in the second shift (post 12 pm).

Police rescued a school bus carrying six children and two staffers after it got stuck on a waterlogged road.

- Civic and disaster management authorities said all personnel remain on high alert, monitoring vulnerable spots and coordinating rescue operations. A man was swept away after he fell into a 'nullah' (major drain) in Navi Mumbai's Sector 28 around noon. The resuce teams have not been able to trace him so far.

Meanwhile, heavy rains in Thane and Palghar districts affected normal life, with waterlogging on the potholed Ghodbunder Road, bringing traffic to a crawl.

A man was swept away after he fell into a 'nullah' (major drain) in Navi Mumbai's Sector 28 around noon. He is yet to be traced.

Civic and disaster management authorities said all personnel remain on high alert, monitoring vulnerable spots and coordinating rescue operations.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Monday reviewed the situation and directed the administration to remain on high alert and prioritise rescue and relief operations.

Pawar appealed to the people to venture out only if absolutely necessary.

Over 200 people were stranded in different villages amid heavy rains in Nanded district, with the Indian Army engaged inrescue and relief efforts. A yellow alert was issued for the district, forecasting heavy rains on Monday and 19 August. *—PTI*

RAINS LASH WIDE PARTS OF KASHMIR VALLEY

SRINAGAR, 18 AUG

Heavy lashed Srinagar, Kupwara, Baramulla, Anantnag and Pulwama districts in Kashmir on Monday, prompting authorities to set up emergency control rooms.

Heavy rainfall was forecast in many parts of Kashmir valley for the next two days.

Extremely heavy rains were forecast in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP) and Yanam, isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP) and Rayalaseema from 19 to 22 August.

Heavy rains lashed parts of Himachal Pradesh on Monday, triggering landslides at several places and prompting closure of 400 roads, including three national highways.

A yellow alert was issued for 11 districts in Jharkhand from 20 August.

Rising water levels in the Beas and Sutlej rivers affected several villages in Punjab's Kapurthala, Ferozepur, Tarn Taran, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, and Fazilka districts. Rapid response teams and mobile medical teams ensure timely medical aid.

Normal life was affected in Odisha as rain lashed Koraput Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Gajapati districts. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

2 held for raping class 12 girl in UP

BALLIA, 18 AUG

Two men have been booked for allegedly raping a Class 12 student when she was returning home after attending the Independence Day celebration at her school here, a police officer said on Monday. A case has been registered against Amarjit Singh, who hails from the minor girl's village, and his uncle Gautam Singh, he said. The 17-year-old girl was returning home after attending the Independence Day programme in her school, when Amarjit forcibly took her to his farm house and allegedly raped her. The accused threatened to kill her if she told anyone about the incident. A case was registered. Efforts are on to arrest the accused. *—PTI*

1 killed in bomb blast near Bengal school

BARASAT, 18 AUG

A bomb explosion outside Madhyamgram High School in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district resulted in the death of one person on Monday. The blast occurred early in the morning, injuring a passerby critically, who was later pronounced dead at Barasat Medical College and Hospital. Superintendent of Police Pratiksha Jharkhariya confirmed that the investigation is ongoing but did not provide further details. West Bengal's Food and Supplies Minister, Rathin Ghosh emphasised the police's commitment to conduct a thorough inquiry. The victim hailed from another state. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Earthquake of 4.3 magnitude shakes Assam

GUWAHATI, 18 AUG

An earthquake measuring 4.3 on the Richter scale struck Assam's Nagaon district on Monday, marking the seventh quake in the state this month and the third in Nagaon alone. The tremor, which occurred at 12.09pm at a depth of 35 kilometres, was felt widely in Nagaon and surrounding areas. Fortunately, there have been no immediate reports of casualties or property damage. The latest quake follows previous tremors of 3.8 and 2.8 magnitudes recorded on August 7 and 8, respectively. According to the National Centre for Seismology, the northeastern region is susceptible to seismic activity due to its location within a high seismic zone. Authorities are monitoring the situation closely. *—PTI*

3 Delhi schools receive hoax bomb threats

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Three schools in Dwarka, Delhi, received bomb threats on Monday, triggering panic and leading to student evacuations. The institutions involved—Delhi Public School (DPS), Modern Convent School, and Shree Ram World School—were alerted via email. Multiple teams from the Delhi Police, including bomb disposal and dog units, conducted thorough searches before confirming the threats were hoaxes. DPS Dwarka announced its closure for the day, stating, "The school has been closed on Monday due to unavoidable circumstances." Police are tracing the IP address of the sender, with investigations involving cyber forensic teams. Between January and August this year, 74 educational institutions in Delhi-NCR have received similar threats. *—PTI*

Indian Army personnel construct a Bailey bridge as part of restoration work at cloudburst-hit Chisoti village in Kishtwar **PHOTO: PTI**

Search for missing still on in Kishtwa

CHISOTI, 18 AUG

Braving heavy rains and difficult terrain, rescuers pressed on with the large-scale search operation to trace those buried under debris in this cloudburst-hit Chisoti of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar on the fifth day on Monday.

The rescue teams were working at multiple locations, sifting through the rubble using heavy machinery, including earth movers and sniffer dogs.

61 people were killed and 100 others were injured in the cloudburst. Around 50 people are still missing.

The flash-floods triggered by the cloudburst left a trail of destruction, flattening a makeshift market, a langar site and damaging important infrastructure.

Army engineers built a Bailey bridge over Chisoti nullah, providing much-needed connectivity to the village and the Machail Mata shrine. The Army has also inducted a couple of all-terrain vehicles to intensify the rescue and relief operation.

The rescuers conducted about half a dozen controlled explosions over the last two days to blow up giant boulders hampering the search.

The annual Machail Mata yatra, which began on 25 August and was scheduled to conclude on 5 September, remained suspended for the fifth consecutive day on Sunday.

The 8.5-km trek to the shrine starts from Chisoti, located about 90 km from Kishtwar town.The rescuers mobilised their resources to speed up the rescue operation. *—PTI*

Maratha general's iconic sword arrives in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 18 AUG

The iconic sword of the famous Maratha general Raghuji Bhonsle I, recently acquired by the Maharashtra Government in an auction in London, was brought to Mumbai on Monday morning, and shifted to the P L Deshpande Academy, state Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shelar said.

The sword of Raghuji Bhonsle I, founder of the Nagpur Bhonsle dynasty and a prominent general in the Maratha army during the reign of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, was acquired by the state government in an international auction earlier this year. The government had earlier stated that the iconic sword was reclaimed at an auction in London for Rs 47.15 lakh. The sword has a single-edged blade and gold decorations on its Mulheri hilt with an inscription. *—PTI*

IIT, ISRO decode X-ray signals from black hole

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, in collaboration with ISRO's UR Rao Satellite Centre and Haifa University, have identified a puzzling pattern of X-ray signals from a black hole approximately 28,000 light-years away. Utilizing data from India's space observatory AstroSat, they discovered that the X-ray brightness alternates between bright and dim phases, each lasting several hundred seconds.

Professor Santabrata Das stated, "We have found the first evidence of rapid X-ray flickering, repeating 70 times per second...These fast flickers disappear during the low-brightness phases." The corona surrounding the black hole oscillates in response to gas flow, revealing more on black hole behaviour. *—PTI*

Army jawan tied to toll booth, assaulted

MEERUT, 18 AUG

An Army jawan was violently assaulted at a toll booth in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, during a dispute with staff members. Kapil Kavad, a soldier from the Rajput Regiment, was on his way to Delhi's airport to return to his post in Srinagar after a holiday.

Caught in a long queue at the crowded Bhuni toll booth, Kapil exited his vehicle to speak with the staff about the delay. The conversation quickly escalated into a heated argument, resulting in at least five employees physically attacking him and his cousin. Shocking footage shows Kapil being beaten with a stick and pinned to a pole as one of the assailants hurled insults and continued to strike him.

Following the incident, police arrested four suspects after reviewing CCTV and other video evidence. Rakesh Kumar Mishra, Superintendent of Police (Rural), confirmed that a case had been registered after Kapil's family filed a complaint. Reports suggest that the altercation ignited when Kapil claimed his village was exempt from toll charges. Two additional teams are currently pursuing the remaining assailants. *—Agencies*

People stage a protest near Bhuni toll plaza after an Indian Army jawan was allegedly assaulted by the toll plaza staff in Meerat **PHOTO: PTI**

Muslim man assaulted over refusal to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'

GARHWAL, 18 AUG

A Muslim man was assaulted by three individuals in Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal district for refusing to chant "Jai Shri Ram" on Independence Day. The victim, Rizwan Ahmad from Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, was left bleeding after the attack, which was captured on video.

Ahmad was at a tea shop run by Rakesh Lal when Mukesh Bhatt, one of the assailants, demanded he chant "Jai Shri Ram." When Ahmad declined, he was verbally abused and assaulted. They yanked Ahmad's beard, insisting he chant the words. *—Agencies*

'Cadets' disability can't be a deterrent'

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Supreme Court of India urged the Centre to provide insurance coverage for cadets facing disabilities during military training, expressing the need to encourage "braveheart cadets" undeterred by injuries. A bench comprising Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan directed the government to consider group insurance for these trainees, alleviating financial burdens from the state to insurers.

The court revealed that only a monthly ex-gratia payment of Rs 40,000 is currently offered to disabled cadets, which is inadequate for their medical needs.

They also emphasized the necessity for better rehabilitation schemes within the defence sector.

Judge recuses self in AMU VC appointment

In another case, Justice K Vinod Chandran recused himself from a hearing concerning the appointment of Professor Naima Khatoon as Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University.

The petition accused a conflict of interest, stemming from the vote of Khatoon's husband in her appointment process. The CJI proposed the matter be reassigned to a different bench.

Former MP's suicide case quashed by SC

The Supreme Court declined to restore an FIR against nine individuals linked to the suicide of former MP Mohan Delkar in 2021, supporting the Bombay High Court's decision to quash the case due to insufficient evidence for abetment claims.

Toxic cassia case dismissed

The Supreme Court also dismissed a plea regarding the sale of toxic cassia as cinnamon in Kerala, stating that the court had directed actions to address the issue. *—PTI*

5 electrocuted in Janmashtami procession in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 18 AUG

Five people were electrocuted and four others injured when a chariot came in contact with overhead electric wires during a procession held as part of Sri Krishna Janmashtami celebrations.

The incident occurred on 17 August in Ramanthapur when the vehicle pulling the chariot with Lord Krishna's idol, ran out of fuel, following which nine people were pushing it.

Suddenly, a snapped cable wire fell on the electricity wires, which in turn touched the brass frame fitted around the deity on the vehicle, leading to the electrocution.Four others were hospitalised, whose medical expense will be borne by the state government. Telangana IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh for the bereaved families. A detailed inquiry will be conducted. *—PTI*

SAME SPOT, MANY ACCIDENTS

Girl falls off bike due to pothole, comes under bus

PALAKKAD, 18 AUG

A minor girl died in front of her father after falling from a scooter and being run over by a bus at Kozhinjampara in Kerala's Palakkad on Monday morning.

Nafisath Misriya and her father were riding the scooter towards the school on the Palakkad-Pollachi Road when the vehicle lost control after an auto rickshaw ahead applied a sudden brake due to a large pothole in the road. Both she and her father fell onto the road.

However, Nafisath , a second-standard student at St Paul's School in Kozhinjampara, fell on the right side of the road and was run over by a bus coming from behind.

Though she died on the spot, people who gathered at the location rushed her to the hospital, where she was confirmed dead. The father escaped with minor injuries.

The incident led to mass protests in the area with people claiming that bad road conditions led to frequent accidents.

The police initiated an investigation into the incident, and a case was registered.

The body of the deceased was shifted to a government hospital for further procedures.

State General Education Minister V Sivankutty expressed his condolences over the tragic death of the girl.

Sivankutty shared a message and a photograph of Nafisath on his Facebook page.

He added, "The sudden loss of that little child, full of dreams, is unbearable pain. I share in the sorrow of Nafisath Misriya's family, classmates, and teachers during this unfortunate incident." *—PTI*

Air India cancels Zurich-Delhi flight over technical issue

MUMBAI, 18 AUG

PHOTO: AIR INDIA

Air India on Monday said it cancelled its Zurich-Delhi flight of August 17 due to a technical reason, days after the Tata Group-owned airline stated that it had carried out a detailed "inspection" of its Boeing 787 aircraft fleet and "no issues" were detected.

In the last two days, Air India has cancelled at least two flights, including one international, at the last moment, citing technical reasons.

"Flight AI152 scheduled to operate from Zurich to Delhi on 17 August has been cancelled due to a technical reason, and subsequently due to night curfew in Zurich," Air India said in a statement.The airline arranged alternative flights along with full refunds on cancellations or complimentary rescheduling. *—PTI*

CRAFT OF CAPTURE

Veteran photographer Tapas Kumar Basu displays vintage cameras, including one with an exposure meter, ahead of World Photography Day. A passionate collector, Basu owns a rare Japanese-made miniature 8mm Mighty film camera from the 1930s, along with over 50 other cameras. Every year on 19 August, World Photography Day celebrates the art, science, and history of photography. First recognised in 1991, the day commemorates the 1837 invention of the daguerreotype, one of the earliest photographic processes ***PHOTO: PTI***

90% of Indians impacted by climate change: Survey

Heatwaves in India are expected to become more severe in the coming years ***PHOTO: PTI***

Nearly 90 per cent of Indians surveyed say they have personally experienced the effects of global warming and an overwhelming majority are worried about it, according to a new survey.

The nationally representative survey of 2,164 adults, conducted from 19 March to 16 April this year by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and CVoter, found that 96 per cent of respondents believe global warming is happening after being given a short definition of the term.

However, only 17 per cent say they know "a lot" about it, while 17 per cent know "just a little" and 27 per cent have never heard of it.

Fifty-eight per cent think global warming is caused mostly by human activities, while 34 per cent say it is mostly due to natural changes in the environment.

Asked about specific causes, 82 per cent say vehicles using petrol or diesel cause global warming "a lot" or "some" and 61 per cent say the same about coal or propane power plants.

Only 26 per cent think raising animals for food causes global warming.

Meanwhile, 84 per cent say plastic pollution causes global warming, even though it is not a major source of greenhouse gases, and 37 per cent attribute it to "God's will".

Seventy-nine per cent think global warming affects the weather in their local area and 83 per cent think it affects the monsoon.

Ninety per cent are worried about global warming, including 58 per cent who are "very worried".

Large majorities say it will harm future generations (89 per cent), people in India (88 per cent), plant and animal species (84 per cent), people in their own community (81 per cent) and themselves or their families (81 per cent).

Sixty-six per cent think people in India are already being harmed.

Many expect "many more" severe heat waves (76 per cent), extinctions of species (69 per cent), droughts and water shortages (69 per cent), agricultural pests and diseases (67 per cent), severe cyclones (66 per cent), days with severe air pollution (66 per cent), famines and food shortages (59 per cent) and severe floods (52 per cent).

Ninety-four per cent say the issue is personally important to them.

Seventy-eight per cent say the government should do more to address global warming and 86 per cent support India's pledge to reduce carbon pollution to nearly zero by 2070.

Eighty-seven per cent say switching from coal to wind and solar will reduce air pollution and 85 per cent say it will reduce global warming, though about half believe it will cause electricity outages (56 per cent), increase unemployment (55 per cent) or raise electricity prices (54 per cent).

Sixty-five per cent say leaving most of India's coal in the ground is the best pathway to a healthy, safe and prosperous future, and 84 per cent support banning new coal power plants, closing existing ones and replacing them with solar and wind energy.

Public backing is high for specific measures, including a national programme to train people for renewable energy jobs (94 per cent), a programme to teach all Indians about global warming (93 per cent), funding women's groups and Indigenous communities to protect the environment (89 per cent), preserving or expanding forests even at the cost of less land for agriculture or housing (79 per cent) and requiring new buildings to waste less water and energy even if this increases costs (76 per cent).

Eighty-three per cent say they follow environmental issues in the news and 81 per cent discuss them with family and friends but only 38 per cent hear about global warming in the media at least once a week.

Sixteen per cent say they took part in demonstrations in the past year to demand climate action and 73 per cent say they would be willing to join such demonstrations if asked by someone they like or respect, including 58 per cent who "definitely would".

On vulnerability, 63 per cent say they usually receive warnings before extreme weather events, with 53 per cent citing television and 51 per cent family, friends or neighbours as sources. However, 36 per cent say they do not get any warnings.

Seventy-four per cent say it would take their household several months or more to recover from a severe drought and 64 per cent say the same about a severe flood.

Thirty per cent say they have already moved or considered moving because of weather-related disasters.

Only 16 per cent have an air conditioner at home and 11 per cent have solar panels.

Thirty-five per cent say they went without enough clean drinking water for at least one day in the past year.

More than half say their income does not cover their needs, with 27 per cent having "some difficulties" and 33 per cent "great difficulties".

Forty-three per cent say they have no friends or relatives they could count on for help if they were in trouble.

The findings are part of the "Climate Change in the Indian Mind" series, which has been tracking public opinion since 2011, along with a separate survey on climate impacts and attribution conducted from December 2024 to February 2025. *—PTI*

SALAR

Covid ages blood vessels by 5 yrs, especially in women

A Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) infection could age one's blood vessels by about five years, especially among women, according to a new study.

The effect was found to be stronger among women who experienced persistent symptoms after recovering from Covid-19 -- collectively termed 'long Covid' -- such as shortness of breath and fatigue.

"Since the pandemic, we have learned that many people who have had (Covid-19) are left with symptoms that can last for months or even years. However, we are still learning what's happening in the body to create these symptoms," lead researcher Rosa Maria Bruno from Université Paris Cité, France, said.

The study, published in the European Heart Journal, looked at around 2,400 people -- about half were women -- from across 16 countries, including Australia, Brazil and those in Europe.

While blood vessels are known to become stiffer with age, a Covid-19 infection can accelerate the process and can heighten the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, including stroke and heart attack, the researchers said.

The participants' vascular (blood vessel) age was measured using a device that looks at how quickly a wave of blood pressure travels between the carotid artery (in the neck) and femoral arteries (in the legs) -- called 'carotid-femoral pulse wave velocity'.

A higher value indicates more stiffness and ageing of blood vessels. Measurements were taken six months after a Covid-19 infection and again after 12 months.

An increase in pulse wave velocity of around 0.5 metres per second is clinically relevant and roughly amounts to ageing by five years, with a three per cent increased risk of cardiovascular disease, in a 60-year-old woman, the researchers said.

The study found that, on average, pulse wave velocity among women who had a mild infection was increased by 0.55 metres per second, by 0.60 metres per second in those hospitalised and by over one metre per second for women treated in intensive care.

"(Pulse wave velocity) differences were significant in women, but not in men. Among Covid-19 positive women, persistent symptoms were associated with higher (pulse wave velocity)," the authors wrote.

"A stable or improved (pulse wave velocity) after 12 months was found in Covid-positive groups, whereas a progression was observed in the Covid-negative group," they wrote.

Explaining how Covid-19 impacts blood vessels, Bruno said that the disease-causing virus "acts on specific receptors in the body, called the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 receptors, that are present on the lining of the blood vessels."

"The virus uses these receptors to enter and infect cells. This may result in vascular dysfunction and accelerated vascular ageing. Our body's inflammation and immune responses, which defend against infections, may also be involved," the lead researcher said.

Further, compared to men, women are known to produce a more rapid and robust immune response which can protect from infection but can also inflict damage on blood vessels after initial infection, Bruno said.

In a related editorial, published in the European Heart Journal, researchers from Harvard Medical School in the US wrote, "Although the acute threat of the Covid-19 pandemic has waned, a new challenge emerged in its aftermath: post-acute Covid-19 syndrome."

The study highlights that " Covid-19's vascular legacy is real, measurable, and with a plausible likelihood of sex-specific findings," they wrote.

"Covid-19 has aged our arteries, especially for female adults. The question is whether we can find modifiable targets to prevent this in future surges of infection, and mitigate adverse outcomes in those afflicted with Covid-19 -induced vascular ageing," the authors said. *—PTI*

The study found that, on average, pulse wave velocity among women who had a mild infection was increased by 0.55 metres per second ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Trump runs into the difficulty of Putin diplomacy, ending long war

Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump met at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

- President Donald Trump walked into a summit with Russia's Vladimir Putin pressing for a ceasefire deal and threatening "severe consequences" and tough new sanctions if the Kremlin leader failed to agree to halt the fighting in Ukraine.

President Donald Trump walked into a summit with Russia's Vladimir Putin pressing for a ceasefire deal and threatening "severe consequences" and tough new sanctions if the Kremlin leader failed to agree to halt the fighting in Ukraine.

Instead, Trump was the one who stood down, dropping his demand for a ceasefire in favour of pursuing a full peace accord — a position that aligns with Putin's.

After calls with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders, Trump wrote as he flew home from Friday's meeting in Alaska that it had been "determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine is to go directly to a Peace Agreement, which would end the war, and not a mere Ceasefire Agreement, which often times do not hold up."

It was a dramatic reversal that laid bare the challenges of dealing with Putin, a cunning adversary, as well as the complexities of a conflict that Trump had repeatedly boasted during his campaign that he could solve within 24 hours.

Trump's position after the summit with Putin

While European leaders were relieved that Trump did not agree to a deal that favored Moscow, the summit allowed Putin to reclaim his place on the world stage and may have bought Russia more time to push forward with its offensive in Ukraine.

"We're back to where we were before without him having gone to Alaska," said Fiona Hill, who served as Trump's senior adviser on Russia at the National Security Council during his first term, including when he last met Putin in Helsinki in 2018.

In an interview, Hill argued that Trump had emerged from the meeting in a weaker position because of his reversal. Other leaders, she said, might now look at the US president and think he's "not the big guy that he thinks he is and certainly not the dealmaking genius."

"All the way along, Trump was convinced he has incredible forces of persuasion," she said, but he came out of the meeting without a ceasefire — the "one thing" he had been pushing for.

Trump administration officials defended the move.

Special envoy Steve Witkoff said on " Fox News Sunday " that Trump had "talked about a ceasefire until he made a lot of different wins in this meeting and began to realise that we could be talking about a peace deal. The ultimate deal here is a peace deal."

"We are intent on trying to hammer out a peace deal that ends the fighting permanently. Very, very quickly — quicker than a ceasefire," he said on CNN.

Trump has touted himself as the president of peace

Trump has tried to cast himself as a peacemaker, taking credit for helping deescalate conflicts between India and Pakistan as well as Thailand and Cambodia. He mediated a peace agreement between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo and another between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to end decades of fighting.

Trump has set his eye on the Nobel Peace Prize, with numerous allies offering nominations.

But Trump has struggled to made headway on the world's two most vexing conflicts: the Russia-Ukraine war and Israel's offensive against Hamas in Gaza.

Some see a Putin win and a Trump loss

In Europe, the summit was seen as a major diplomatic coup for Putin, who has been eager to emerge from geopolitical isolation.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, praised the summit as a breakthrough in restoring high-level dialogue between Moscow and Washington.

Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt called the meeting "a distinct win for Putin. He didn't yield an inch" but was also "a distinct setback for Trump. No ceasefire in sight."

"What the world sees is a weak and wobbling America," Bildt posted on X.

Witkoff disagreed.

"I think we ought to be focusing on what the end result is," he said. "I think that we are a whole lot closer to eliminating death on the battlefield in Ukraine and Russia, and it's the overall goal." *—PTI*

US: Indian-origin trucker held for homicide

FLORIDA, 18 AUG

A semi-truck driver has been arrested for vehicular homicide following an illegal U-turn on the Florida Turnpike that resulted in the deaths of three people. Authorities identified the driver as Harjinder Singh, who has reportedly been living unlawfully in the US since 2018. The truck's cab footage shows Singh making the sudden manoeuvre, leading to a fatal collision. The White House Rapid Response team confirmed his arrest, stating, "This individual is an illegal immigrant who was granted a commercial driver's licence by the State of California — and now, three innocent people are dead." Florida Highway Patrol Executive Director Dave Kerner said it was "shocking and criminal... Three people lost their lives as a result of his recklessness." *—Agencies*

Polio cases in Pakistan rise to 21 in 2025

ISLAMABAD, 18 AUG

Pakistan has reported two new cases of poliovirus, bringing the total to 21 this year, according to Geo News. The fresh cases emerged in Lower Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh provices, involving a six-year-old girl and a 21-month-old girl, respectively said The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH) . Of the 21 cases this year, 13 are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and six from Sindh, with one case each from Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan. Following strong resurgence in 2024 with 74 confirmed cases, polio is on the rise. A Sub-National Polio Vaccination Campaign is scheduled from 1 to 7 September, aiming to vaccinate over 28 million children under five. *—PTI*

Air Canada strike: Plan to restart flights postponed

TORONTO, 17 AUG

Air Canada has postponed its plans to resume operations after the union representing 10,000 flight attendants announced they would defy a return-to-work order. The strike, which began early Saturday, is affecting approximately 130,000 travellers daily during the peak summer season. The Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) ordered employees to return to work by 2pm Sunday, leading Air Canada to announce a restart later that evening. However, the airline has now stated that operations will resume by Monday evening. "(We) are not going back to work," said Mark Hancock, President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. "We are saying no." *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Terence Stamp aka Superman villain dies at 87

LONDON, 18 AUG

Terence Stamp, the acclaimed British actor famed for his complex villain roles, including General Zod in the early Superman films, has died at 87. His passing was announced in an online death notice, leading to tributes from fans and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA). Starting his career in 1962's 'Billy Budd,' Stamp's noteworthy roles included Bernadette in 'The Adventure of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert' and Freddie Clegg in 'The Collector.' Edgar Wright, who directed him in 'Last Night in Soho,' described Stamp as "kind, funny, and endlessly fascinating". Stamp was born on 22 July, 1938, and was known for h is striking presence. *—PT*

US: Zelenskyy can end war if he wants

Zelenskyy arrives in DC with EU leaders as Trump says NATO can't enter Ukraine

WASHINGTON, 18 AUG

A day before meeting his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy, US President Donald Trump claimed that the Ukrainian leader could "end the war with Russia almost immediately if he wants to."

Trump appeared to say that the return of Russian-occupied Crimea and Ukrainian membership of NATO would be off the table in any negotiated settlement.

"Zelenskyy can end the war with Russia almost immediately, if he wants to, or he can continue to fight," he wrote on Truth Social. "Remember how it started. No getting back Obama given Crimea (12 years ago, without a shot being fired!), and NO GOING INTO NATO BY UKRAINE. Some things never change!!!"

Zelenskyy, who has arrived in Washington with European leaders for talks with Trump said that Ukraine would not give up territory.

"And peace must be lasting. Not like it was years ago, when Ukraine was forced to give up Crimea and part of our East--part of Donbas--and Putin simply used it as a springboard for a new attack. Or when Ukraine was given so-called 'security guarantees' in 1994, but they didn't work," Zelenskyy wrote on X as he announced his arrival in Washington.

He further asserted that Ukraine would not cede any more territory. "Crimea should not have been given up then, just as Ukrainians did not give up Kyiv, Odesa, or Kharkiv after 2022."

The meeting comes after Trump had a "10 out of 10" meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday.

Trump is first set to meet Zelenskyy, and then European leaders with the Ukrainian President. The leaders include European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Finnish President Alexander Stubb and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte. *—Agencies*

The Russian Army fires rockets towards Ukrainian position, from an undisclosed location in Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

7 PEOPLE were killed in an overnight Russian attack on a residential area in Kharkiv, Ukraine. A toddler and teenager were injured.

(Putin's) certainly asking for things that the Ukrainians and others are not willing to be supportive of and that we're not going to push them to give, and the Ukrainians are asking for things that the Russians are not going to give up on

—Marco Rubio, US Secretary of State

It's important that America agrees to work with Europe to provide security guarantees for Ukraine, and therefore for all of Europe.... We all equally want to end this war quickly and reliably

—Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine President

As part of a truce, a ceasefire or a peace deal, (Ukraine) may recognise the loss of territories.... (But) no country will accept even actual territorial losses if it has no guarantees that the rest of its territory will be protected

—Emmanuel Macron, French President

Europe is buying Russian oil from China, says Rubio

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 18 AUG

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio accused Europe of buying "a lot" of Russian oil from China.

"Well, if you look at the oil that's going to China and being refined, a lot of that is then being sold back into Europe," Rubio said in an interview with Fox Business on Sunday. "Europe's also buying natural gas still. Now, there are countries trying to wean themselves off it, but there's more Europe can do with regard to their own sanctions."

However, Rubio said the Washington was not considering placing secondary sanctions on Europe, like the US had previously done on India.

"Well, I don't know about (sanctions) on Europe directly. But there are implications," he said. "If you put secondary sanctions on a country – let's say.... China. (It) just refines that oil. That oil is then sold into the global marketplace, and anyone who's buying that oil would be paying more for it."

"When you talk about the Senate bill that was being proposed – where there was a hundred per cent tariff on China and India – we did hear from a number of European countries – not in press releases, but we heard from them," he said.

He added that he doesn't want to get into a tit-for-tat with the Europeans on this matter. *—PTI*

'Putin's guards carried his poop from Alaska'

Putin's bodyguards reportedly carried a "poop suitcase" to collect his faecal waste during the Friday Alaska summit with Trump. The unusual security measure was said to be aimed at preventing foreign powers from obtaining information about the Russian leader's health. Members of the Russian President's Federal Protection Service (FPS) collect his human waste, including his faeces, store it in special bags, and carry it in dedicated briefcases, The Express US reported. The measure reportedly dates back several years, including Putin's visit to France in May 2017.

Pak rain toll reaches 657; 1,000 injured

PESHAWAR, 18 AUG

The death toll from rain-related incidents in Pakistan since late June has risen to at least 657, with nearly 1,000 reported injuries, according to officials. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Spokesperson Tayyab Shah announced in a media briefing that heavy monsoon rains are expected to continue until 22 August, with additional spells anticipated in September, intensifying this year's record rainfall by 50 to 60 per cent compared to last year.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has been the hardest hit, accounting for 390 deaths, while Punjab recorded 164 fatalities. Casualties in Sindh total 28, and Balochistan 20, with Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir also reporting fatalities.

In Buner, approximately 150 individuals are reported missing, with 84 confirmed dead due to flash floods triggered by cloudbursts.

Ikhtiar Wali Khan, Prime Minister's Coordinator for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs, described the situation as a human tragedy.

He warned that in Dir alone, deaths could exceed 1,000, while over a thousand people are still missing. He said the toll only reflects the bodies brought to hospitals.

"Mass burials are taking place", he said. "I have returned from Buner with a heavy heart after witnessing this disaster with my own eyes." *—Agencies*

Residents walk past shops damaged after the devastating flash floods, in Pir Baba, Buner district, Pakistan **PHOTO: PTI**

Tires set ablaze during a protest demanding the release of the hostages and calling for the govt to reverse its decision to take over Gaza City near Jerusalem, Israel **PHOTO: PTI**

Myanmar to hold polls on 28 Dec amid war

BANGKOK, 18 AUG

Myanmar's military-appointed election commission announced Monday that elections will begin 28 December, setting a date for polls that critics have denounced as a sham intended to normalise the army's 2021 seizure of power even as armed conflict rages throughout much of the country.

The Union Election Commission said in a statement sent to journalists that the elections will be conducted in phases over several days and that a full schedule will be released soon.

A separate statement from the commission said that all 330 townships in the country have been designated as constituencies for the election.

Nearly 60 parties, including the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, have registered to run, according to the list on the commission's website.

Much of the country is wracked by civil war and it is unclear how polling can take place in areas not under the control of the government.

Several Opposition organisations, including armed resistance groups, have said they will seek to derail the election. Last month, the government enacted a new law that imposes punishments of up to the death penalty for anyone who opposes or disrupts the elections. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

US to push for Israel & Lebanon ceasefire

BEIRUT/ RAFAH, 18 AUG

US' Special Envoy to Lebanon said that his team would discuss the long-term cessation of hostilities with Israel after Beirut endorsed a US-backed plan for the Hezbollah militant group to disarm.

60 people died in Israeli strikes in Gaza on Monday. In total, 62K Palestinians have been killed

Tom Barrack, following a meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, said Washington would seek an economic proposal for post-war reconstruction, after months of shuttle diplomacy between the US and Lebanon.

Barrack is also set to meet with Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Speaker Nabih Berri.

"The Lebanese government has done their part," he said. "Now what we need is for Israel to comply."

Meanwhile, Egyptian and Qatari mediators were holding talks with Hamas in their latest effort to broker a ceasefire with Israel in the Gaza Strip, as at least five people, including two children starved to death. *—PTI*

Right raises its head in Bolivia after 2 decades

LA PAZ, 18 AUG

Bolivia's Presidential vote headed to an unprecedented runoff after a vote Sunday that ended more than two decades of Left-wing dominance in the Andean nation but signalled voters' trepidation about a major lurch to the Right.

A dark horse centrist, Sen. Rodrigo Paz, drew more votes than the Right-wing front-runners, although not enough to secure an outright victory, early results showed.

Paz, a former mayor who has sought to soften the edges of the Opposition's push for tough austerity to rescue Bolivia from economic collapse, will face off against Right-wing former president Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, who finished second. Bolivia will hold the second round — its first Presidential runoff since its 1982 return to democracy — on 19 October.

With over 91 per cent of the ballots counted Sunday, Paz received 32.8 per cent of the votes cast. Quiroga secured 26.4 per cent. Candidates needed to surpass 50 per cent, or 40 per cent with a 10-point margin of victory, to avoid a runoff. *—PTI*

Presidential candidate Rodrigo Paz addresses supporters in La Paz, Bolivia on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

ONE AMONG THOUSANDS

Iraq starts excavating mass graves left by Islamic State

IRBIL, 18 AUG

Iraqi officials begun the excavation of what is believed to be a mass grave left behind by the Islamic State during its rampage across the country a decade ago.

Local authorities are working with the judiciary, forensic investigations, Iraq's Martyrs' Foundation, and the directorate of mass graves to carry out the excavation of the site of a sink hole in al-Khafsa, south of the northern city of Mosul.

Ahmad Qusay al-Asady, head of the Martyrs Foundation's mass graves excavation department said that his team began work at Khasfa on 9 Aug at the request of Nineveh province's Gov. Abdulqadir al-Dakhil. The operation is initially limited to gathering visible human remains and surface evidence while preparing for a full exhumation that may require international support.

After an initial 15 days of work, the foundation's Mosul teams will build a database and start collecting DNA samples from families of suspected victims.

Rabah Nouri Attiyah, a lawyer who has worked on more than 70 cases of missing people in Nineveh, said it might be "the largest mass grave in modern Iraqi history."

Al-Asady, however, said investigators "cannot confirm yet if it is the largest mass grave" to be found in Iraq, "but according to the size of the space, we estimate it to be one of the largest."

Attiyah said roughly 70 per cent of the around 1,000 human remains at Khasfa are believed to belong to Iraqi army and police personnel.

At its peak, IS ruled an area half the size of the UK in Iraq and Syria and. It beheaded civilians and enslaved and raped thousands of women from the Yazidi community. Scores of mass graves containing thousands of bodies of people have been found in Iraq and Syria. *—PTI*

Workers dig out human remains at the Khasfa site near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Dozens missing after boat capsises in Nigeria

ABUJA, 18 AUG

Authorities have reported that at least 40 people are missing following a boat capsize on a river in northwestern Nigeria. The incident occurred on Sunday in the Goronyo area of Sokoto State while the vessel was ferrying passengers to a market, as stated by Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in a release late Sunday.

NEMA confirmed that only 10 individuals have been rescued as search and rescue operations are ongoing in the region. This latest tragedy marks another in a series of fatal boat accidents on Nigerian waterways. Such incidents are common in remote communities during the rainy season, often attributed to overloaded and poorly maintained boats.

In a similar incident last month, a boat carrying passengers to a market in north-central Nigeria capsized, resulting in at least 25 fatalities.

According to local media outlet TheCable, at least 326 people have died in boat accidents in Nigeria so far in 2024. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold prices remain flat at ₹1,00,920/10g

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 1,00,920 per 10g in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Saturday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had declined Rs 500 to close at Rs 1,00,920 per 10g from Thursday's closing of Rs 1,01,420 per 10g. The Bullion markets were closed on Friday on the country's 79th Independence Day. In the local market, the yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity remained flat at Rs 1,00,500 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Monday. On the global front, spot gold went up marginally to trade at USD 3,349.29 per ounce in New York. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee rises by 20P, closes at 87.39 against USD

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The rupee appreciated 20 paise to close at 87.39 against the US dollar on Monday, supported by strong domestic equities. Forex traders said Indian rupee traded on positive territory on the GST reforms that Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommended in his 15 August address to nation. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 87.46 against the US dollar, and touched an intraday low of 87.48 and a high of 87.33 and settled at 87.39, registering a gain of 20 paise over its previous close. Forex was closed on Friday for Independence Day. *—PTI*

23% of 56.04 cr PM Jan Dhan accounts inoperative

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

As many as 23 per cent of the total 56.04 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts are inoperative, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday. Out of 56.03 crore PMJDY accounts at the end of 31 July, 2025, 13.04 crore such accounts are inoperative, he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha. Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of inoperative Jan Dhan accounts of 2.75 crore, followed by Bihar at 1.39 crore and Madhya Pradesh at 1.07 crore, he said. As per Reserve Bank of India guidelines, a savings account should be treated as inoperative/dormant if there are no transactions in the account for over a period of two years. The government has taken various steps to ensure smooth functioning of PMJDY accounts, including Direct Benefit Transfer. *—PTI*

CleanMax files draft papers for Rs 5,200 cr IPO

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions, a provider of renewable energy for commercial and industrial sectors, has submitted its draft papers to market regulator Sebi for an Initial Public Offering (IPO) worth Rs 5,200 crore. The issue includes a fresh issuance of shares valued at up to Rs 1,500 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of Rs 3,700 crore from promoters and an investor. Notably, founder Kuldeep Pratap Jain will offload shares worth Rs 321.37 crore. The fresh issue proceeds will be used to repay debt and for general corporate purposes. The company reported a 13 per cent increase in revenue from operations, amounting to Rs 1,610.34 crore in FY25, turning a profit of Rs 27.84 crore. Lead managers for the IPO include Axis Capital, JP Morgan India, and HSBC. *—PTI*

Investors' wealth surges by Rs 6.17 lakh crore

Sensex jumps by 676.09 pts while Nifty climbs by 245.65 pts

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Investors' wealth surged by Rs 6.17 lakh crore on Monday, helped by a sharp rally in the equity market where the BSE Sensex jumped 676 points, buoyed by plans for big bang reforms in the GST regime by Diwali.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 676.09 points or 0.84 per cent to settle at 81,273.75. During the day, it zoomed by 1,168.11 points or 1.44 per cent to 81,765.77.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 245.65 points or 1 per cent to end at 24,876.95. Intraday, it surged 390.7 points or 1.58 per cent to 25,022.

Tracking the rally in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms jumped by Rs 6,17,875.19 crore to Rs 4,50,96,486.46 crore.

The Centre has proposed a 2-tier GST structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, besides a 40 per cent special rate on a select few items to the GoM on GST rate rationalisation.

The proposal, which entails removing the current 12 per cent and 28 per cent tax slabs, will be discussed at the 2-day meeting of the state ministerial panel on August 20 and 21 in the national capital, sources said.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Among Sensex firms, Maruti zoomed the most by 8.94 per cent. Bajaj Finance, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever and Trent were among other major gainers from the pack.

However, ITC, Larsen & Toubro, Eternal and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

Auto stocks were in high demand, with Hyundai Motor India jumping 8.45 per cent.

The BSE auto index jumped 4.26 per cent to 56,233.33.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.39 per cent while midcap index climbed 1 per cent.

IT, power, teck and BSE Focused IT were the laggards.

As many as 2,560 stocks advanced while 1,629 declined and 176 remained unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

Auto stocks vroom, buoyed by GST reforms

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Auto stocks grabbled the limelight on Monday, with Maruti Suzuki India jumping nearly 9 per cent, buoyed by plans for big bang reforms in the GST regime by Diwali.

Shares of Maruti Suzuki India surged 8.94 per cent, Hyundai Motor India zoomed 8.45 per cent, Ashok Leyland jumped 8.12 per cent, Apollo Tyres rallied 7.28 per cent, TVS Motor Company climbed 6.58 per cent, Hero MotoCorp edged higher by 5.90 per cent, and Bajaj Auto advanced 4.52 per cent on the BSE.

The stock of MRF went up 4.11 per cent, Mahindra & Mahindra (3.54 per cent), Eicher Motors (2.46 per cent), and Tata Motors (1.78 per cent).Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor, Ashok Leyland, TVS Motor, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Eicher Motors hit their one-year peaks in intra-day trade.

The BSE auto index jumped 4.26 per cent to 56,233.33. *—PTI*

STRATEGIC COLLAB

JSW Steel, POSCO partner for 6 MTPA steel plant in India

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Homegrown JSW Steel and the POSCO Group of South Korea have joined hands to explore setting up a 6 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) steel plant in India.

As part of the next steps, JSW and POSCO will undertake a detailed feasibility study to finalize the plant's location, investment terms, resource availability, and other critical factors.

In a statement on Monday, JSW Steel said it has signed a non-binding Heads of Agreement (HoA) to jointly explore setting up a 6 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) integrated steel plant in India.

Given its natural resource base and logistical advantages, Odisha is among the key locations being considered.

The HoA was signed in Mumbai in the presence of Lee Ju-tae, Representative Director and President, POSCO Holdings, and Jayant Acharya, Joint Managing Director & CEO, JSW Steel.

"This partnership brings together JSW's proven execution capabilities and strong domestic footprint with POSCO's technological leadership in steelmaking. The proposed venture aligns with India's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and will help create a globally competitive manufacturing hub to serve both domestic and export markets," Acharya said.

The agreement marks a significant step toward deepening strategic collaboration between JSW Steel and POSCO Group of South Korea.

JSW Steel is the flagship business of the USD 23 billion JSW Group and India's leading integrated steel producer with a consolidated capacity of 35.7 MTPA, including 1.5 MTPA in the US.

In 2022, POSCO Group, leading industrial group in South Korea, had signed a pact with Adani Group to explore business opportunities in sectors like steel, renewable energy among others. *—PTI*

GST cut to boost AC, TV sales; prices to drop by Rs 2,500

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The appliance makers expect a good churn in the festive season, led by the government's proposal to reduce the GST slab on air-conditioners from the current 28 per cent to 18 per cent, which will reduce the price from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 depending on the models.

Moreover, this reduction in price, which has come after the government's recent Income tax cut and repo rate revision, will not only help in increasing penetration of ACs but also premiumisation, where people will buy energy-efficient models due to cost advantages.

Besides, this will also help to bring the GST slabs on TV screens above 32 inches from the current 28 per cent to 18 per cent. Terming it as a "great move", Blue Star Managing Director B Thiagarajan has asked the government to implement the changes quickly as people have put their purchase of Room AC (RAC) on hold.

"Nobody will buy RAC now in August, will wait till September or 1 October. So, in between what will happen in between. The dealers will not buy and customers will not buy" Thiagarajan. On being asked about the price benefit to the customer, he said, "This will be around 10 per cent", as GST is levied on final pricing.

Panasonic Life Solutions India Chairman Manish Sharma said the industry was expecting around 12 per cent GST on energy-efficient products and rest in 18 per cent bracket.

However, "in a situation where GST on ACs and other appliances are reduced from 28 to 18 per cent, there will be a straight 6 to 7 per cent odd price reduction in the market, because normally GST is charged on the base price. So, this is phenomenal," he said.

This will result in reduction of Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 depending on the end consumer prices of an AC, depending on the models, he said.

Similarly, Godrej Appliances said the proposed reduction in tax slabs will significantly help to boost consumption and drive appliances demand.

According to Nandi, currently room ACs are taxed at 28 per cent, and other appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, microwaves already have 18 per cent GST.

Avneet Singh Marwah, CEO of Super Plastronics Pvt Ltd, a TV manufacturing company having licenses of several global brands, said this will increase consumerism in the domestic market and boost sales in estive season. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Semiconductor mkt to triple to $100B: Report

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

India's semiconductor market, currently valued at USD 34.3 billion, is projected to triple to USD 100.2 billion by 2032, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20 per cent, according to a Union Bank of India Research report. This significant growth aligns with the global semiconductor industry's expected expansion to USD 1 trillion by 2030, growing nearly 10 per cent annually.

The nation exported semiconductor devices worth USD 516 million in 2022, primarily to the United States, while imports reached USD 4.55 billion, dominated by China, Singapore, and Vietnam. Telecom & industrial applications are predicted to drive two-thirds of demand, fuelled by growth in 5G, AI, and electric vehicles.

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw applauded these advancements, emphasising the goal of developing indigenous chipsets. "Chipsets with our own IP is an important objective in this journey," he noted, referring to the Semiconductor Mission and Design Linked Incentives (DLI) aimed at supporting startups in chip design. *—PTI*

Apple rents 2.7L sqft office space in Bengaluru

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

iPhone maker Apple India has leased around 2.7 lakh square feet of office space in Bengaluru for 10 years with a starting monthly rent of Rs 6.3 crore, according to data analytics firm Propstack.

Apple is the biggest exporter of mobile phones from India. It exported iPhones worth about Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the financial year 2024-25.

The company has taken multiple floors including car parking space on lease from real estate firm Embassy Group.

The iPhone maker is estimated to pay more than Rs 1,000 crore in rent, car park and maintenance charge over a period of 10 years, as per Propstack, which has reviewed the registration document of this leasing transaction. Apple declined to comment on an email query.

The lease has been signed for a period of 120 months or 10 years with effect from 3 April, 2025.

The fresh investment from Apple comes despite US President Donald Trump openly calling out the company for expanding operations in India. According to the documents, the company has leased nine floors starting from 5th till 13th floor in Embassy Zenith. *—PTI*

B'LURU 4TH GLOBALLY IN PRICE HIKE OF HOMES

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

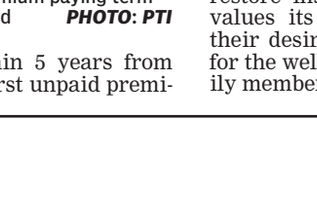
Bengaluru ranked 4th among 46 global cities in annual prime residential price growth, according to Knight Frank's Prime Global Cities Index Q2 2025. Seoul topped the list with a 25.2 per cent rise, followed by Tokyo and Dubai. Bengaluru saw a 10.2 per cent increase, ahead of Mumbai (6th, 8.7 per cent) and Delhi (15th, 3.9 per cent). The global average stood at 2.3 per cent. Knight Frank noted Indian cities remain resilient, driven by strong demand, limited prime supply, and urban wealth creation.

Meanwhile, net leasing of office space in Bengaluru dipped 3 per cent year-on-year to 6 million sq ft in Jan–Jun 2025, according to Cushman & Wakefield. Pan-India, net leasing rose 24 per cent to 27.8 million sqft. *—PTI*

Google to pay $36M for anticompetitive deals in AUS

MELBOURNE, 18 AUG

Google has agreed to pay a 55 million Australian dollar ($36 million) fine for signing anticompetitive deals with Australia's two largest telcos that banned the installation of competing search engines on some smartphones, the US tech giant and Australia's competition watchdog said.



Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said in a statement it had commenced proceedings in the Australian Federal Court on Monday against the Singapore-based Google Asia Pacific division. The court will decide whether the $36 million penalty is appropriate.

Under the anticompetitive agreements, which were in place for 15 months until March 2021, Telstra and Optus only pre-installed Google Search on Android phones sold to customers. Other search engines were excluded. In return, the telcos received a share of the advertisement revenue Google generated from those customers.

Google accepted that the agreements were likely to have the effect of "substantially lessening competition," it said. *—PTI*

UPI transactions exceed Rs 90K cr in August: SBI

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has witnessed remarkable growth in 2025, with daily average transaction values soaring past Rs 90,000 crore in August, according to a State Bank of India (SBI) report. Average daily transaction values rose from Rs 75,743 crore in January to Rs 80,919 crore in July, further climbing to Rs 90,446 crore this month. SBI emerged as the top remitter member, processing 5.2 billion transactions, while Yes Bank led as the beneficiary member, handling nearly 8.0 billion.

However, the report cautioned against the dominance of third-party app providers like PhonePe and Google Pay, advocating for a "Desi Counter Intuitive App" to leverage data effectively. *—PTI*

2 MONTH CAMPAIGN

LIC launches campaign to revive lapsed policies

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Monday announced the launch of a month-long campaign for revival of individual lapsed policies.

This special drive, to be carried out from 18 August to 17 October, 2025, is extended to all non-linked policies with very attractive concession in late fee.

Concession is being offered in late fee for all Non-Linked Insurance Plans up to 30 per cent of late fee up to a maximum amount of Rs 5,000 if eligible for revival under the scheme, LIC said in a statement.

There is a 100 per cent waiver of late fee for Micro Insurance Policies to facilitate affordable restoration of risk cover, it said.

Policies, which are in a lapsed condition during the premium paying term and not completed policy term, are eligible to be revived PHOTO: PTI

Under this Special Revival Campaign, policies can be revived within 5 years from date of the first unpaid premium subject to satisfying the policy terms and conditions, it said.

Policies which are in a lapsed condition during the premium paying term and not completed policy term are eligible to be revived in this campaign.

There are no concessions on medical/health requirements, it said.

The campaign is launched for the benefit of policyholders who were not able to pay premiums on time due to any unfavourable circumstances and policies must be kept in force to get full insurance benefit, the statement added.

"It is always advisable to revive an old policy and restore insurance cover. LIC values its policyholders and their desire to stay protected for the well being of their family members," it said. *—PTI*

Telcos' profit to rise 12-14% amid data surge: Crisil

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

India's telecom companies are predicted to see their operating profits grow by 12-14 per cent to approximately Rs 1.55 lakh crore this fiscal year, thanks to increased data consumption and a rise in average revenue per user (ARPU), according to Crisil Ratings.

The analysis notes, "Every Re 1 increase in ARPU adds Rs 850-950 crore to the industry's operating profit." With ARPU expected to jump to Rs 220-225, this growth is underpinned by surging data usage. Crucially, telcos are rebalancing offerings to entice users towards premium plans, which bundle over-the-top services.

Nitin Bansal highlighted that capital expenditure intensity is projected to decline to 24-26 per cent due to completed 5G rollouts. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ishan Kishan to miss Duleep Trophy opener

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan will miss out on the Duleep Trophy opener for East Zone as he is currently recovering from a minor injury sustained during his county stint with Nottinghamshire in the UK. For the clash starting from 28 November, Kishan has been replaced by Odisha's Aashirwad Swain in the East Zone's squad, as per ESPNCricinfo. Kishan's injury required multiple stitches, which is why he was not selected as a replacement for Rishabh Pant ahead of the fifth and final Test against England at The Oval, as the superstar batter was ruled out due to a foot injury.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Aditi logs best finish of 2025, 6th in Portland

PORTLAND, 18 AUG

Aditi Ashok fired a final round of 5-under 67 to finish sixth in The Standard Portland Classic held at Columbia Edgewater Country Club on the LPGA. The sixth-place finish is Aditi's best finish of the season on the LPGA and only the second Top-10 finish this season.Aditi shot 69-70-65-67 to finish the week with a score of 17 under par. She had seven birdies and two bogeys in her final round.Indian-American Gurleen Kaur shot 7-under 65 on the final day for her career-best result of second with a total score of 20-under par.Kaur shot rounds of 65-68-70-65 to end the week four strokes behind the winner, Akie Iwai.—*PTI*

Jon Rahm wins LIV Golf season points title

WESTFIELD, 18 AUG

Jon Rahm successfully defended his LIV Golf season points title without winning an event all year, closing with an 11-under 60 before losing a playoff to Sebastian Munoz on the first extra hole in the Indianapolis event. Munoz won two days after becoming the first player to shoot 59 with a double bogey. The Colombian player, with Rahm hitting balls on the driving range, birdied the final two holes in regulation for a 65 to match Rahm at 22 under at The Club at Chatham Hills. Rahm also lost on the first extra hole last week outside Chicago, falling to Dean Burmester in a three-way playoff that included Josele. On Sunday, Munoz beat the Spanish star won the playoff with a 6-foot birdie putt on the par-4 18th. "It's a great moment, but it just doesn't feel great to finish the year losing two playoffs," Rahm said. "I'm sure over time I'll get over that.—*PTI*

Srinagar's Dal Lake to host first-ever Water Sports

SYDNEY, 30 OCT

The first-ever Khelo India Water Sports Festival is all set to reveal the iconic Dal Lake in a new avatar. Jammu and Kashmir's quest to emerge as a sporting destination will get a major boost when Dal Lake hosts the Water Games, its maiden major national-level Open competition, from 21-23 August. More than 400 athletes from 36 states and Union Territories will be taking part in three medal events - rowing, kayaking and canoeing. The Union sports ministry's endeavour to promote sports activities in Jammu and Kashmir has already established Gulmarg as a top winter sports hub.—*PTI*

Asia Cup: Gill, Siraj likely to miss continental tournament

DUBAI, 18 AUG

SHUBMAN GILL
PHOTO: PTI

The Asia Cup 2025 cricket tournament is a couple of days away, and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will soon announce the squad for the upcoming continental tournament. However, the Cricbuzz report states that two players who performed well during the England series are unlikely to get picked for the tournament.

As per the report, Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj are set to miss out on selection, with team management looking towards other options. Gill hammered over 750 runs - second only to the legendary Sunil Gavaskar in terms of aggregate in a series, while Siraj picked 23 wickets during the series. Suryakumar Yadav is reportedly fit and is expected to captain the side.

How to fit in a brilliant batter like Shubman Gill in a well-oiled T20 set-up will be the biggest challenge for India's national selection committee when it gathers on Tuesday to pick the 15-member squad for next month's Cup in the UAE.

As of now, the prolific Test captain, who had a dream run in England recently, is not organically fitting into the side which will play the continental showpiece from September 9 to 28.

For Ajit Agarkar and his colleagues, the major point of deliberation will be how to fix something that doesn't need to be mended.

It's a "scary" conundrum for the selectors, but Indian cricket right now is a T20 talent factory with at least 30 players who are ready to come into the national squad, with three to four options available for one slot.

For the top three positions, there are six cricketers of similar pedigree available.

Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma have been phenomenal in national colours through last season, but then the ones who are equally good, if not better, happen to be Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sai Sudharsan (the IPL Orange Cap winner).

MOHAMMED SIRAJ
PHOTO: PTI

In bowling, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy and Ravi Bishnoi are jostling for one slot. And the craftiest of them all, Yuzvendra Chahal, has been ignored for the longest time. —*PTI*

Atletico Madrid loses La Liga season opener

It's their 1st opening defeat since Simeone became coach in 2011

MADRID, 18 AUG

Espanyol's players celebrate at the end of the Spanish LaLiga soccer match between RCD Espanyol and Atletico Madrid, in Barcelona
PHOTO: @ATLETICODEMADRID

Despite debuting most of its new signings, Atletico Madrid couldn't avoid conceding two late goals and losing its opening Spanish league match for the first-ever time under coach Diego Simeone.

Host Espanyol's 2-1 win on Sunday night was Atletico's first opening defeat since Simeone took over in late 2011. It hadn't previously lost an opening league game since 2009.

It was a good start for Espanyol under the ownership of England-based group Velocity Sport Limited and its American shareholders.

"What a wonderful way to start the season, with a win against Atlético Madrid!" U.S. businessman Alan Pace posted on Instagram after attending the match in Barcelona.

Simeone started the match with five of the club's new signings for the season: Álex Baena, Thiago Almada, Johnny Cardoso, David Hancko and Matteo Ruggeri. Giacomo Raspadori also made his debut coming off the bench in the second half.

Atletico took the lead with Julián Alvarez's free kick in the 37th minute, but conceded goals by Miguel Rubio in the 73rd and Pere Milla in the 84th. "It happens," Simeone said. "The result hurts, but it's going to make us improve and grow. I'm left with all the good things the team did."

Last season, Atletico lost a league match that it was leading. "We played a very good first half and we had the match under control in the second," Atletico midfielder Koke said. "But after their first goal, they turned things around."

Barcelona began the defence of its Spanish league title with a comfortable 3-0 win at nineman Mallorca on Saturday. Real Madrid hosts Osasuna on Tuesday Nico leads AthleticWith transfer rumours in the past, Nico Williams led Athletic Bilbao to a 3-2 win over Sevilla in its opening Spanish league match.

Williams, who had been linked with a move to Barcelona in the offseason but seems set to stay with his boyhood club. —*PTI*

'MAGICAL HURT'

Feeling will stay: Bashir on Siraj's dismissal at Lord's

LONDON, 18 AUG

Off-spinner Shoaib Bashir believes that the joy he felt after dismissing India's Mohammed Siraj to seal the Lord's Test in favour of England will stay with him "forever" and was also generous enough to give a slice of credit to former teammate Moeen Ali for advising him to bowl the carrom ball.

The 21-year-old, who was ruled out of the remainder of the five-Test series after suffering a fracture on his little finger at Lord's, had already dismissed Siraj with the carrom ball in the second Test at Edgbaston.

With Ravindra Jadeja (61 not out) threatening to take India home at London, skipper Ben Stokes summoned Bashir for the final act, and the youngster did not disappoint, ousting Siraj with a delivery that bounced and turned viciously.

"I met Moeen Ali for the first time at Edgbaston and we spoke a lot," Bashir told The Sunday Times. "Mo encouraged me to bowl the carrom ball. He's someone I've always looked up to, and for him to say, 'Back yourself to do it,' meant a lot." Bashir said he had been working on the variation for some time but only gained the confidence to use it after Moeen was invited to England's training camp.

"I just wanted to show that I've got that strength in me. I bowled it a few times, and it came out nicely. I got Siraj out with it (stumped in the first innings), with a slow ball, it was only about 43 to 44mph.

"Since Edgbaston, I've been in touch with Mo a fair few times. He's a legend and someone I look up to massively, especially being an off-spinner in England, which is not an easy job," he added. —*PTI*

SHOAIB BASHIR
PHOTO: PTI

Sheena Varkey latest to be caught in dope net

NEW DELHI, 18 AUG

Triple jumper Sheena Varkey, who has won multiple national-level medals and even represented the country internationally, has been suspended by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) after testing positive for a prohibited substance. The 32-year-old had also competed in the 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games.

"Sheena Varkey has been suspended," a well-placed source told PTI, but did not divulge the details of the banned substance in question. Varkey, who hails from Kerala, had won a silver medal at the Uttarakhand National Games this year and a bronze in the Federation Cup after that. In 2018, she won a silver medal at the Asian Indoor Championships. The latest failed test continues the alarmingly regular dope setbacks for India's athletes. On August 11, National Games gold-winning discus thrower Gagandeep Singh was among a bunch of athletes across sports who were handed three-year bans by NADA after they accepted their offence within 20 days of being charged.—*PTI*

Asian Shooting: Indian men's air pistol team clinches silver

SHYMKENT, 18 AUG

PHOTO: PTI

Indian shooters' quest to better their medal tally at the Asian Championships (rifle/pistol/shotgun) began with the men clinching the 10m air pistol team silver, while Faridabad marksman Anmol Jain missed out on an individual medal in the event, finishing sixth here on Monday.

The men's team, comprising Anmol (580), Aditya Malra (579), and Asian Games gold medallist Saurabh Chaudhary (576), aggregated a score of 1,735 to finish behind China, who took the gold by amassing 1,744 points. Iran took the bronze, totalling 1,733 points. In the individual men's 10m air pistol section, Anmol, who progressed into the final in seventh place with a qualification score of 580, ended up sixth in the medal round, aggregating 155.1 points.

Hu Kai of China took the gold with a score of 241.6, while South Korea's Hong Suhyeon and Iran's Amir Joharikhou bagged the silver and bronze with scores of 239.0 and 216,8, respectively.

The other two Indian shooters, Aditya (579) and Chaudhary (576), finished 13th and 21st, respectively, after the qualification round and missed the finals. Interestingly, Amit Sharma, a 20-year-old who started competing internationally as a junior in 2023, —*PTI*

CINCINNATI FINAL

Iga Swiatek swamps Elena Rybakina, to face Jasmine Paolini

CINCINNATI, 18 AUG

Iga Swiatek reached the final of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open for the first time on Sunday, surging past Elena Rybakina 7-5, 6-3 to book a title clash with Jasmine Paolini. The six-time Grand Slam champion earned a Monday evening final against an opponent with nothing to lose after Paolini managed to "forget" a patch of bad form to claim a 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-3 win over Russian Veronika Kudermetova. The 29-year-old, who was a two-time Grand Slam finalist in 2024, will bid for the fourth title of her career when she faces Swiatek, who is set to compete in her 13th final at the 1000 level as she closes in on a return to world number two. Swiatek, the reigning Wimbledon champion, recovered an early break in the opening set and powered away to beat 2022 All England winner Rybakina, who had swept past world number one and defending champion Aryna Sabalenka in the quarter-finals. The former world number one from Poland, now ranked third, had twice stalled at the semi-final stage at the pre-US Open event, but booked her title chance on her third opportunity.

PHOTO: X/@ATP-WTA

"It was a great match, and at the beginning, I was even surprised that I was able to keep up with the pace, because we played so fast," Swiatek said.

"I wanted to be there when Elena starts making mistakes. It's impossible to play such a good level throughout the whole match." —*PTI*

KRITI AND IYER CONTINUE THEIR WINNING STREAK IN ALL INDIA CHESS MASTERS

MUMBAI, 6 JUNE

WCM Kriti Patel, ACM Arvind Iyer, and Dhruv Muthe continued their respective winning streaks in the third round of the All India Chess Masters Mumbai FIDE Classical Tournament here on Monday.

Playing with black pieces, Kriti Pate got the better of Anvay Patil, while Arvind Iyer defeated Mediansh Poojary to record his third successive victory.

Muthe also registered his third straight win as he defeated Murli R and remained in the top position in the standings.

Results top-10 round 3: Aditya Kumar 2 lost to IM Aaryan Varshney 3; Mediansh Poojary lost to ACM Arvind Iyer 3; Om Gada 3 beat Vinod Chatruvedi 2; Shorya Lakshayjeet 2 lost to AFM Sahil Chogle 3; Samvid Pasbola 2 lost to Vedant Gogri 3; Aryan Kumar 2.5 drew with Apurv Deshmukh 2.5; Anvay Patil 2 lost to WCM Kirti Patel 3; Murli R. 2 lost to Dhruv Muthe 3; Amit Naik 3 beat Manya Balani 2; Reya Banker 3 beat Tvesha Jain 2. —*PTI*

Kriti Patel
PHOTO: PTI

SOCCER TRANSFER RULES CASE

Lassana Diarra hits FIFA with $76M suit

EUPEN, 18 AUG

Lawyers for former France international Lassana Diarra said Monday he is claiming 65 million euros ($76 million) from FIFA and the Belgian soccer federation after a landmark legal win about transfer rules.

Diarra's decade-long challenge to FIFA after a breakdown in relations with his former club Lokomotiv Moscow led to a ruling at the European Union's top court last October that some aspects of soccer's transfer rules do not comply with the 27-nation bloc's labor and competition laws.

Lawyers for the 40-year-old former Chelsea, Arsenal, and Real Madrid midfielder cited "unsuccessful settlement negotiations with FIFA" for the financial claim for damages throughout his career.

"Lassana Diarra is claiming ₹65 million gross (₹35 million net) in compensation from FIFA and the Belgian Football Association," his legal firm Dupont Hissel said in a statement.

FIFA was approached for comment about the latest high-stakes legal challenge to its authority.

Diarra's case, which is back in court in Belgium, is supported by the global players' union FIFPRO, its European division, and their national member union in France.

LASSANA DIARRA
PHOTO: X/@LASSANADIARRA

The legal case started in the home country of Charleroi, the Belgian club that wanted to sign Diarra after his contract in Moscow was terminated. FIFA transfer rules at the time made the player and the potential signing club liable for paying the former club when a contract was ruled to have been broken without just cause. —*PTI*

PSG get Ligue 1 title defence off to winning start

LONDON, 18 AUG

Paris Saint-Germain got their defence of the Ligue 1 title off to a winning start on Sunday night as Vitinha's deflected strike proved enough to earn the European champions a 1-0 victory away to Nantes. The Portuguese midfielder's effort midway through the second half beat goalkeeper Anthony Lopes with the aid of a wicked deflection off Nantes defender Chidozie Awaziem to break the deadlock. PSG were made to work hard for their victory as coach Luis Enrique made seven changes to his starting line-up following the UEFA Super Cup win on penalties against Tottenham Hotspur in midweek.

VITINHA
PHOTO: X/@PSG

That was the first game of the new campaign for last season's Champions League winners, who only began pre-season training on August 6, having gone all the way to the Club World Cup final in the United States in mid-July.

They did not play any friendly matches before that and are therefore likely to require several weeks before getting close to the level at which they performed last season. —*PTI*